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After the Aisle

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Although Wyatt '04 and Lauren '06 Messinger graduated more than a decade ago, Furman University still plays an important role in their lives. The couple met at Furman in the fall of Lauren Buquo's freshman year when she went to visit a friend from her hometown of Chattanooga, Tennessee. During that fateful visit, she met her friend's roommate, a political science major named Wyatt Messinger.

Through a common group of friends, Lauren and Wyatt got to know each other over the following year and "officially" started dating in fall of 2003. They continued to date long distance after Wyatt graduated and took a job with a corporate communications and management firm in Washington, D.C., a position he landed with the help of a Furman alumnus.

A biology major, Lauren started medical school at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond in 2008. The couple was apartment hunting for Lauren in Richmond one weekend when Wyatt asked her to marry him.



Wyatt and Lauren Messinger *A Capital Couple*

By M. Linda Lee

They married a year later. As Wyatt was still living in D.C. at the time, thus began what he refers to as the "long national nightmare" of maintaining a long-distance relationship while Lauren finished her medical degree in Richmond and then a four-year residency in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Happily, the duo now lives and works in Washington, D.C., where Lauren practices as an OB-GYN and Wyatt is a managing director for

Purple Strategies. Between their demanding careers and keeping up with their 2-year-old son, it's difficult to imagine that this power couple has any spare time. Yet, just as they have stuck together over the years, they have remained involved with their alma mater.

"Wyatt's career was strongly influenced by the Furman alum who hired him," Lauren says. "To see that play out showed me what an important impact alumni

could have on students and their careers."

Last spring, the couple joined the Furman Partners Program, where donors can invest in a student's future.

So the couple established the Messinger Family Scholarship. "You get to define some of the parameters of the scholarship, and we merged our academic experiences by asking that the recipient be interested in a career in either health care or health care policy," explains Wyatt.

"It's nice that the student knows who you are and you get their name and information, so there's a personal touch to it, too," Lauren adds.

From the academic rigor that prepared them for success to the lifelong friendships they formed in college, Furman has left a lasting imprint on the couple, who continue to look for ways to give back to their university.

"We now find ourselves in a location where there's opportunity to give back, and we're at a point in our lives where we have the time and the energy and the means," Wyatt says. "It's very much a priority for us." ●